

CD 2011--79/80



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

Nexus + 2X10

Monday, October 17, 2011

7:30 p.m. Walter Hall

Edward Johnson Building

80 Queen's Park

2011-12 SEASON

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

NEXUS

Bob Becker, Bill Cahn, Russell Hartenberger, Garry Kvistad

2X10

Midori Koga, Lydia Wong, piano

PROGRAM

① CD I

From me flows what you call Time

01:35 - 30:33

Toru Takemitsu
(1930-1996)

Arranged percussion and two pianos (1990/2011)

- I Introduction
- II Entrance of the Soloists
- III A Breath of Air
- IV Premonition
- V Plateau
- VI Curved Horizon
- VII The Wind Blows
- VIII Premonition
- IX Mirage
- X Waving Wind Horse
- XI The Promised Land
- XII Life's Joys and Sorrows
- XIII A Prayer

CD II

INTERMISSION

① **Mallet Quartet**

For 2 vibraphones and 2 marimbas

0:39 - 15:12

Steve Reich
(b.1936)

② **ALICE TALK**

Heart to Heart - world premiere

For 2 pianos

0 - 12:12

Alice Ping Yee Ho
(b.1960)

④ **Dance Patterns** - Canadian premiere

For 2 xylophones, 2 vibraphones, 2 pianos

1:19 - 7:07

Steve Reich

This concert is performed on the Edith McConica Steinway piano.

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Program Notes

TORU TAKEMITSU (1930-1996)

arr. William L Cahn

From me flows what you call

Time, arr. percussion and two pianos
(1990/2011)

Members of the soon-to-be-formed group Nexus first met Toru Takemitsu in 1969 when the Japanese composer visited Toronto for concerts and recordings of his music. A few years later, they were invited to Japan to perform in Takemitsu's *Music of Today* series. Then, two decades after their first meeting, the group gave the première of *From me flows what you call Time* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Seiji Ozawa at Carnegie Hall. Takemitsu had been approached by Nexus long before the première to write a concerto for percussion and orchestra. But it was only when Carnegie Hall requested a new piece to celebrate its centenary that the composition really came together. Since then, *The New York Times* has referred to the piece as Nexus's 'signature piece' and the ensemble has performed it 80 times.

The music plays continuously within 13 sections and lasts a little over a half-hour in performance. The title comes from a line in the poem 'Clear Blue Water' by Japanese poet and critic Makoto Ooka. "When I first read the words 'From me flows what you call Time,'" Takemitsu says, "I suddenly imagined 100 years of time flowing through this man-made space, so full of special meaning, called Carnegie Hall. It was as if I could hear the Hall murmuring from the numberless cracks between the layers of those years . . . Thus, the 'me' in the title is meant to be Carnegie Hall and not the composer."

Although the piece calls for large resources for both orchestra and percussion, restraint, contemplation and silence are hallmarks of Takemitsu's writing, often with great underlying intensity. His music is a meeting ground of both Western and Eastern traditions. Many influences can be heard in *From me flows what you call Time*, particularly those of French composers, including Messiaen, with whom the mostly self-taught composer had a single compositional lesson. Symbolism is key to much of Takemitsu's inspiration, beginning with the ritual he would go through before composition of a new piece. After sharpening pencils and laying out paper and an eraser, Takemitsu would play through Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* on the piano, taking a long time to do so, he said, "since I do not play very well." The number five is central to *From me flows what you call Time*, initially because of the five original members of Nexus, around whose individual playing the composer composed the piece. The number five affects its construction beginning with a five-note motif within a perfect fifth which then generates further series. Takemitsu takes the number symbolism further, recalling that the number five is central to the imagery of the Tibetan Wind Horse ritual (*rlung-rta*) that was in his mind as he composed the piece. At the work's première, five coloured banners linked together the five solo musicians onstage with the bells that were softly rung along the top balcony as the piece ends. "Because the solo performers assume an important role," Takemitsu explains, "this work is not an ordinary concerto. It is an orchestral work in which the orchestra, like nature,

surrounds us limitlessly, and out of that limitlessness, the soloists materialise in limited forms such as earth, wind, water and fire, then once again dissolve into limitless nature. The ruling emotion of the work is one of prayer. And because it both stimulates and is sustained by the performer's spontaneity, the work will always materialise in a different shape (or sound) whenever it is performed."

Bill Cahn recently made today's arrangement for the four members of Nexus plus two pianos, using Takemitsu's original solo resources, with one set of timpani.

STEVE REICH (b.1936)

Mallet Quartet for two vibraphones and two marimbas (2009)

"My music has never submitted to conventional boundaries. . . I was taught by Hall Overton, Vincent Persichetti, Darius Milhaud and Luciano Berio. But I was as influenced by Ghanaian drumming, Balinese gamelan and Hebrew chant as I was by Bartók, Stravinsky, Pérotin and Bach." That's American composer Steve Reich speaking on his 70th birthday, five years ago. This year, 75th anniversary concerts of Reich's music are being held around the world and the Kronos Quartet recently premièred *WTC 9/11*, reflecting the composer's constant exploration of the connection between composed music and real life. Reich's open mind and rigorous re-examination of the very nuts and bolts of composition have made him a key player in the transformation of Western classical music since the Sixties. Where an entire

generation was heading relentlessly down a path of rigorously organising pitch, rhythm, dynamic and structure, Reich and a handful of equally determined non-conformists and innovators in the States and Europe questioned convention and went back to basics. As a student in Oakland, California in the early 1960s, Reich studied serialism by day with Berio – 'from the horse's mouth,' he says. By night, however, John Coltrane and his modal jazz at the Jazz Workshop truly fired the young composer's creative juices. "The opposition between people writing enormously complicated pieces that nobody could play – pieces I wasn't even sure they could hear in their heads – and a man who simply got up on stage and played his instrument, was almost irresistible," Reich says.

Minimalism was the description given to the new music that began to be produced by Reich and Glass in North America and Pärt, Nyman and Andriessen among others in Europe. It frequently used repetition and canon for structural purposes, both tonal and non-tonal harmony in a non-traditional hierarchy, together with slow, seemingly frozen harmonic change. A beat often underlined this process-driven music. It was played initially by bands established by the so-called 'minimalist' composers themselves to better convey their vision. New, often large audiences were drawn to the genre-bending results which, in Reich's case, also embraced non-Western culture and the American vernacular. Yet, despite the wide appeal of his music – and unlike some of his fellow pioneers – Reich maintained a rigorous, often painstakingly logical path to continuous evolution. Along the way he has opened

up deeper colour, sonority, texture and structure in his music, as he has embraced other media, the spoken word, visual arts and video. "People assumed there was a mathematical basis for what I composed, since there were clearly musical processes working themselves out in my music. But they were wrong," he says. "All these processes were founded on musical intuition: I judged the results by ear. I've sometimes used samplers and computers, but have also felt the need to rid myself of technology and just write for musicians and singers. And so it has continued and grown to this day."

Steve Reich writes: "Mallet Quartet (2009) is scored for two vibraphones and two five-octave marimbas. I had never written for five octave marimbas extending down to cello C. On the one hand I was delighted to have the possibility of a low bass and on the other hand apprehensive since just slightly too hard a mallet that low can produce noise instead of pitch. Eventually, after a bit of experimentation, this was well worked out. The piece is in three movements: *fast, slow, fast*. In the two outer fast movements the marimbas set the harmonic background which remains rather static compared to recent pieces of mine like *Double Sextet* (2007). The marimbas interlock in canon, also a procedure I have used in many other works. The vibes present the melodic material first solo and then in canon. However, in the central slow movement the texture changes into a thinner more transparent one with very spare use of notes, particularly in the marimbas. I was originally concerned this movement might just be 'too thin.' But I think it ends up being the most striking, and

certainly the least expected, of the piece. *Mallet Quartet* is about 15 minutes in duration. It was co-commissioned by the Amadinda Quartet in Budapest, Nexus and Soundstreams Canada, So Percussion in New York, Synergy Percussion in Australia."

The world première of this wonderfully sonorous, rhythmically propelled piece was given by the Amadinda Quartet in Bela Bartók National Concert Hall on December 6, 2009. The American première followed in January and the Canadian première was given by today's performers on April 29, 2010.

ALICE PINGYEE HO (b.1960)
Heart to Heart, for two pianos

From alicepingyeeho.com: "One of the most acclaimed composers writing in Canada today, Hong Kong-born Alice Ping Yee Ho has written in many musical genres and received numerous national and international awards, including the du Maurier Arts Ltd. Canadian Composers Competition, MACRO International Composition Competition, Luxembourg International Composition Prize and International League of Women Composers Competition. Critics have called her music dramatic and graceful, while praising its 'organic flow of imagination,' colourful orchestration, and emotive qualities. Influences evident in her proudly eclectic approach include Chinese folk and operatic idioms, Japanese Taiko and African drumming, and jazz. Her ongoing goal is to explore new musical styles that are provocative to the ears. "Colours and tonality are two attractive resources to me: they form

certain mental images that connect to audiences in a very basic way.”

Alice Ping Yee Ho writes: “The work is inspired by Emily Dickinson’s poem ‘Have you got a brook in your little heart’ which deals with subjects of questioning love and faith. There is also an emotional aspect to the piece which reflects deep affection and mutual understanding between two individuals -- which is most appropriate to describe the kind of support and keen receptiveness between players in a duet situation. The primary structure of the work will consist of a recurring musical dialogue between the two instruments and this ‘consoling’ theme will connect the four stages of the composition that highlight certain emotions found in the four stanzas of the poem: questioning, hope, self-reflection, yearning for reassurance. The music can be conceived as an imaginary conversation between two souls quietly exchanging their inner thoughts in an intimate, engaging, but at times passionate and tantalizing manner.”

STEVE REICH (b.1936)

Dance Patterns for 2 xylophones, 2 vibraphones, 2 pianos (2002)

Steve Reich writes: “Dance Patterns (2002) was composed for choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker and filmmaker Thierry de Mey. De Mey had completed an hour-long film of de Keersmaecker’s choreography entitled Counterphrases and asked several composers to write a five- or six-minute piece for a completed section of the film. The pieces were performed live, while the film was being shown, by the Ictus Ensemble, who commissioned all the music. Dance Patterns is scored for two pianos, two vibraphones, and two xylophones, and is about six minutes in duration.”

— Takemitsu and Reich introductions
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CANADIAN
BRASS

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After 40 years of playing the world’s finest concert halls, and with over 2 million CDs sold worldwide, the venerable Canadian Brass makes its first appearance on the Chamber Music Series. Not to be missed!

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Biographies

The first, entirely improvised NEXUS concert in 1971 marked the formation of a group that would touch and entertain people of all levels of musical learning, in all genres of percussion music.

Bob Becker, Bill Cahn, Russell Hartenberger and Garry Kvistad are virtuosos alone, and bring elements of their knowledge and character to a distinct and powerful whole. They stand out in the contemporary music scene for the innovation and diversity of their programs, their impressive history of collaborations and commissions, their revival of 1920's novelty ragtime xylophone music, and their influential improvisatory ideas. NEXUS' firm commitment to music education and a steady output of quality CD recordings and compositions by its members continues to enhance the role of percussion in the twenty first century.

NEXUS' music, with its widespread appeal, has taken the group on tours of Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Brazil, Scandinavia, Europe, and regularly to the United States and Canada. NEXUS is proud to have been the first Western percussion group to perform in the People's Republic of China. They have also enjoyed participating at international music festivals such as the Adelaide, Holland, Budapest Spring, Singapore Arts, Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Blossom Music Festivals, as well as the BBC Proms in London, Music Today and Music Joy festivals in Tokyo, and many World Drum Festivals. NEXUS is the recipient of the Banff Centre for the Arts National Award and the Toronto Arts Award. NEXUS was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in

1999, just before celebrating their 30th anniversary season.

Especially renowned for their improvisational skills, NEXUS was called upon to create the musical score for the National Film Board's *Inside Time*, which won the 2008 Yorkton Golden Sheaf award for best social/political documentary and the 2008 Robert Brooks award for cinematography. Television and radio broadcasters such as CBS, PBS, and CBC have regularly featured this leading percussion ensemble. NEXUS also created the chilling score for the Academy Award-winning feature-length documentary *The Man Who Skied Down Everest*. NEXUS' list of high-profile collaborations includes Steve Reich, the Kronos Quartet, the Canadian Brass, and clarinetist Richard Stoltzman.

Toru Takemitsu, a great friend to NEXUS, composed one of their signature pieces, *From me flows what you call Time*. This work, written with each NEXUS member's personality in mind, was premiered for Carnegie Hall's centennial celebration in 1990 with Seiji Ozawa conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra (recorded on Sony with the Pacific Symphony). In 2005, Pulitzer Prize winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich composed *Rituals* for NEXUS and Chamber Orchestra. *New Music Box* calls it "one of Zwilich's most exciting compositions to date... [a] blockbuster piece!" The recording features NEXUS and the IRIS Orchestra.

Recent NEXUS events include performances at the 2008 Ojai Festival in California where the Los Angeles Times music critic commented, "Ojai felt, for that hour, like holy ground."

This followed on their 2007 Ojai performances that reviewer Charles Donelan called "thrilling" and said would "certainly stand as one of the most memorable of 2007 in any venue, anywhere". NEXUS has also recently appeared at the Colours of Music, Cool Drummings, Collingwood, Kincardine and the Ottawa Chamber Music Festivals, and at Woodstock Beat in New York. A solo CD entitled *Wings* has just been released, and their CD *out of the blue* with Fritz Hauser was released in March 2007. NEXUS' previous solo CD was the Juno-nominated *Drumtalker*. In 2007 NEXUS honored John Cage at Bard College's Fisher Center in New York, giving the U.S. premiere of *Dance Music for Elfrid Ide* (1940), which was rediscovered in 2005. In October NEXUS spear-headed the Talking Drum Symposium with the Jackman Humanities Institute, held on two U of T campuses. NEXUS premiered a newly commissioned work by the acclaimed composer Eric Ewazen in Texas in November 2008. In April 2009 NEXUS premiered a new work by marimba virtuoso Gordon Stout (commissioned on behalf of NEXUS by Frank Zappa's percussionist Ruth Komanoff Underwood). Upcoming events include tour dates in Japan, New York, Virginia, Ontario, and appearances with the Syracuse and the Austin symphony orchestras, and the completion of a new recording of John Cage's works with Adrienne Clarkson and others.

Piano duo **2X10** was formed in the summer of 2007 by pianists Midori Koga and Lydia Wong. 2X10's mandate is to commission new works by Canadian composers as well as to play the great

works of the existing duo piano repertoire. As winners of an Ontario Arts Council Grant, 2X10 recently commissioned composer Alice Ho for the virtuosic work *Glistening Pianos* which was premiered in 2009 in Walter Hall.

With performances described as "passionate" (*Ann Arbor News*) and "terrific" (*St. Petersburg Times*), pianist **MIDORI KOGA** has been featured as soloist and chamber musician throughout the world, including appearances at the American New Arts Festival, the Al Fresno New Music Festival, the ProMozart Society of Detroit, the World Saxophone Congress in Valencia Spain, and the International Computer Music Festival. Chamber music collaborations include those with the internationally acclaimed percussion ensemble NEXUS, Soundstreams Ensemble, with members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and the Toronto Wind Quintet. In addition, she has performed with the Esprit Orchestra, and the TSO in their New Creations Festival. Midori Koga, currently serves as Associate Professor of Piano and Director of Piano Pedagogy at the University of Toronto.

One of Canada's most sought after collaborative pianists, acclaimed for her "vivacious playing" (*Daily Telegraph*) and "sparkling clarity" (*The Strad*) **LYDIA WONG** appears regularly with the world's pre-eminent performers. Venues across the globe from Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City to London's Wigmore Hall have featured her expertise in partnership with such artists as Edgar Mayer, the late Lorand Fenyves, Patrick Gallois, Michel Lethiec,

Yuri Bashmet, Nobuko Imai, Arto Noras, Erika Raum, Shauna Rolston, and Scott John. A graduate of the University of Toronto and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Ms. Wong has been

on faculty at the University of Toronto since 2000. She is also artistic coordinator of the Collaborative Piano Internship program at the Banff Centre where she has been on faculty since 1993.

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PROGRAM

Mozart: *Partita in E-flat major*

Mozart: *Serenade in C minor*

Dvořák: *Serenade in D minor, Op. 44*

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Monday, November 28, 2011

7:30 pm. Walter Hall

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She has appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, with the American Ballet Theater company, and in Broadway musicals and TV commercials. The "Renaissance woman" is a founding member of the internationally renowned Native women's a capella trio, 'Ulali'. She is recognized for bringing a new genre of Native contemporary music to the forefront of the mainstream music industry and has won the Native American Music Award, a L'Academie Charles Cros Award, and a Juno nomination.

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7:30 pm. Walter Hall

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